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Managing My Shame: Examining the Effects of Parental Identity Threat and Emotional Stability on Work Productivity and Investment in Parenting

Abstract

We identify parental identity threat as a blended work-family experience (i.e., when the family domain becomes a salient aspect of the work domain) that prompts working parents to attend to their parenting identities while at work. By integrating theoretical arguments related to role identities, self-conscious emotions, and identity maintenance, we propose that parental identity threat provokes working parents' shame, which then results in disparate cross-domain outcomes in the form of reduced work productivity and enhanced investment in parenting. We further explain that emotional stability serves as a first-stage moderator of the proposed mediated relationships. Specifically, working parents with high (versus low) emotional stability respond to parental identity threat with weaker shame reactions that then lessen the effects onto work productivity and investment in parenting. We tested our predictions across three studies: an experiment, a multi-source field study involving working parent-spouse dyads, and a time-lagged experience sampling study across 15 days also using working parent-spouse dyads. Altogether, our findings generally support our predictions. Theoretical and practical implications and future direction are discussed.

Keywords: work-family blending, identity threat, shame, emotional stability, parenting

Parents are experiencing heightened demands with respect to attending to their work- and family-related identities (i.e., how they view themselves regarding each social role; Howard, 1991; Ladge et al., 2015; Ladge & Little, 2019). Working parents not only experience pressure to exemplify an “ideal” worker role (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015), but they are also expected to engage in intensive parenting practices to raise successful children (Hoffman, 2010). Although “worker” and “parent” roles complement each other because parents work to provide for their children (Duncan et al., 2003) and children motivate parents to work hard (Menges et al., 2017), the coexistence of these two roles can also foster considerable tension (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2020; Johnston & Swanson, 2007). Indeed, working parents today are often judged according to their abilities to exemplify each role (Ladge & Little, 2019), but with limited resources (e.g., Ladge & Greenberg, 2015; Ladge et al., 2015)—giving fully to one role naturally comes at the expense of the other (Burke, 1991; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006).

Although most parents are likely to wrestle with the complexities of working while parenting (Pew Research Center, 2015), research is just starting to explore how working parents manage the tension between their work- and family-related identities (Gabriel et al., 2020; Ladge et al., 2015; Ladge & Little, 2019; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). As working parents aim to exemplify both worker and parenting roles (Ladge & Little, 2019), organizations would benefit from understanding workplace occurrences that challenge working parents’ concepts of themselves with respect to these roles. Indeed, Gabriel et al. (2020) called for research to consider blended work-family experiences, which exist when an aspect of one’s family life becomes salient at work and therefore merges with work life. They argued that modern-day work experiences can force parents to actively consider their parenting role during work hours, which can produce disparate effects for each role.

We contribute to this burgeoning research by identifying a blended work-family experience in the form of a parental identity threat. *Parental identity* involves the parenting aspect of one's self-concept, or how parents understand themselves regarding this role (Maurer et al., 2001). *Parental identity threat* exists when working parents perceive that an occurrence at work has challenged, questioned, or reduced their understanding of themselves as parents (e.g., Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Maurer et al., 2001; McConkie-Rosell & DeVellis, 2000). For example, coworkers may ask working parents if their long hours prevent them from spending quality time with their children (e.g., Ladge & Greenberg, 2015), which may prompt them to perceive a threat to their parenting identity because they are left questioning themselves as parents. We argue that parental identity threat represents a blended workplace experience because the threat forces working parents to "...occupy a blended work-family role space during work...whereby aspects of the work and family domains are both activated" (Gabriel et al., 2020, p. 1338). Both work and family domains become activated at work because parental identity threat prompts working parents to reconcile their threatened identity in relation to work as the source of the threat.

To understand parental identity threat at work, we integrate theoretical arguments related to role identities (Howard, 1991; Stryker, 1968), self-conscious emotions (Haidt, 2013; Tangney et al., 2007), and identity maintenance (Koerner, 2014; Ladge & Little, 2019; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), to propose that parental identity threat provokes shame (i.e., a dysphoric emotion that entails self-evaluation; Bonner et al., 2017), with shame then prompting outcomes that have different implications for work and family domains. Specifically, we posit that parental identity threat propagates shame reactions that reduce work productivity (i.e., efforts directed at meeting work demands; Pritchard et al., 1988) but increase investment in parenting (i.e., shared activities

between parents and children; Gutman et al., 2005). We also propose emotional stability as a moderator for unveiling *when* parental identity threat may be more or less problematic. In comparison to those low in emotional stability, those high in emotional stability respond to self-discrepancies more evenly (Hardin & Lakin, 2009; Scott & O'Hara, 1993; Weilage & Hope, 1999) and thus may react to parental identity threat with weaker shame reactions because they are not as critical of their social failings and are less prone to negative self-judgments (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In turn, they may respond with weaker effects onto work productivity and investment in parenting.

Our research makes a number of contributions to the literature. First, although past theorizing on work-family identities has proposed a relationship between perceived role shortcomings and identity maintenance behaviors (Ladge & Little, 2019), the process by which identity discrepancies drive role specific behaviors is not well understood. Thus, we contribute to the literature by identifying the importance of shame (Tangney et al., 2007) in understanding the relationship between identity threat in work-family experiences and subsequent identity maintenance behaviors. Second, past research has noted the plurality of shame in terms of driving both self-protective and self-repair behaviors (Bonner et al., 2017), but research has rarely examined the influence of such plurality on diverging domains. In this respect, we contribute to the literature by theoretically explaining why parental identity threat drives shame reactions that produce paradoxical outcomes in work and family. Third, although extant research often discusses the benefits of identity integration at work (e.g., Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015), our research reveals the complexity of identity management by identifying how and why the activation of parental identity threat at work can be good or bad across domains. Fourth, past work-family research has mainly investigated how positive and negative experiences from one

domain spillover to influence experiences in the second domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 1999; McNall et al., 2010). Our research is unique because it substantiates the nuanced nature of work-family experiences in terms of identity maintenance that may propel divergent, domain-specific behaviors that are good for one domain and simultaneously bad for the second domain. Finally, we contribute to the literature by identifying emotional stability as an individual difference that may make parental identity threat less daunting. In this way, we provide a practical contribution by identifying the type of workers who need more or less support in managing cross-domain identity tensions.

Parental Identity Threat and Identity Theory

Identity theory (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Turner, 1978) posits that a person's self-concept is determined by answering the question: "who am I?" In answering this question, an individual's self-concept is directly tied to their roles in life and the cultural expectations placed upon those roles (Baumeister et al., 1998; Howard, 1991). In this respect, an individual's self-concept entails a number of role identities that allow them to understand their priorities regarding specific roles (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Although people have multiple role identities beyond work (Burke, 1991), family identity is arguably more enduring than other role identities because the family role is a persistent and irrevocable aspect of human life (e.g., Rothbard, 2001). The family identity represents how people define themselves, or view their self-concept, with respect to the family role (Bear, 2019; Greenhaus & Powell, 2016; Masterson & Hoobler, 2015) and serves as a broader identity that subsumes a parental identity (e.g., Bear, 2019; Lobel, 1991). A parental identity involves the parenting aspect of one's self-concept, or how people view themselves with respect to their child-rearing experiences (Maurer et al., 2001). Rather than examining family identity, our research examines the more specific parental identity because

caring for one's offspring is a central principle of human nature (Dahm et al., 2019) and is considered a moral imperative (Duncan et al., 2003; Shirani et al., 2012), which may underscore the gravity of upholding this identity in comparison to a broader family identity.

A person's parental identity includes expectations and priorities (e.g., Stryker & Serpe, 1982) that are shaped by societal trends and norms (e.g., Duncan et al., 2003; Shirani et al., 2012), such as a strong cultural consensus that parents should prioritize their children's needs above the needs associated with other role identities (McCarthy et al., 2000). Parents are expected to invest considerable resources into raising their children because the "nurture" ideology suggests that parenting plays a large role in cultivating children's futures (Shirani et al., 2012). Parents use these and other socially-constructed norms to formulate self-standards for good parenting, which contributes to the parenting identity. Indeed, the very essence of fulfilling an identity is to be a good example of the underlying social role (e.g., Hogg et al., 1995).

When people are satisfied with their enactment of the parenting role, they evaluate themselves positively and feel validated in their status as parents (Callero, 1985). However, parents may perceive a misalignment between their parenting practices and expectations of good parenting (Ladge & Little, 2019), which may provoke an identity threat (e.g., Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Ashforth et al., 2016; Elsbach, 2003; Thoits, 1991). Parental identity threat exists when individuals perceive that an occurrence related to work has undermined, or called into question their understandings of themselves as parents (Maurer et al., 2001; McConkie-Rosell & DeVellis, 2000). Importantly, parental identity threat entails a blended workplace experience, in which an aspect of family overlaps with work (Gabriel et al., 2020). The threat permeates the psychological boundary, or "border," that typically exists to demarcate work and family roles (Clark, 2000) because it forces working parents to contemplate and to reconcile their parenting

identities in relation to work as the source of threat. As working parents try to re-establish a favorable parenting identity (e.g., Ladge & Little, 2019), they operate within a “borderland,” or an area of work-family blending (Clark, 2000), in which elements of both family and work are activated throughout the process of identity reconciliation.

In response to parental identity threat, we theorize that individuals will rely on their subsequent feelings of shame to guide their attempts to restore their identities. Although past research has suggested that various types of identity threat may result in negative emotions such as anger (e.g., Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Henderson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2012; Inzlicht & Kang, 2010), anger arises due to others’ misdeeds and thus provokes desires to redress another person’s wrongdoing (Haidt, 2003; Izard, 1977). In contrast, we examine parental identity threat in relation to shame because this emotion arises from self-evaluations of one’s failings and thus influences how people rebalance their threatened identity (Gruenewald et al., 2007; Leary, 2007).

Parental Identity Threat, Shame, and Identity Maintenance

Shame is a specific type of self-conscious emotion that “...arises due to negative self-evaluations of one’s moral character” (Greenbaum et al., 2020, p. 96). Initial shame reactions suggest to people that they have done something socially inappropriate (Beer & Keltner, 2004; Gruenewald et al., 2007; Leary, 2007), which increases their chances of being viewed by others as socially or morally flawed (Ferguson et al., 2007). Because shame is an uncomfortable emotional experience that elicits self-condemnation (e.g., “I am a bad person”) (Tangney et al., 2007), people typically try to avoid situations that are likely to induce shame (Brown, 1970; Lagattuta & Thompson, 2007). In particular, people avoid shame by obeying social norms, which also allows them to fulfill the social goal of acceptance and group membership (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Experiencing shame, on the

other hand, indicates that one's social standing may be in jeopardy because of socially-questionable attitudes or behaviors (Tangney et al., 2007).

Parental identity threat is a work-family experience that is likely to induce shame (e.g., Scarnier et al., 2009). Parents feel threatened when they perceive that an occurrence at work has challenged, undermined, or called into question the way they want to view themselves as good parents. Parental identity threat prompts parents to consider their socially-constructed ideals of proper parenting and whether they are failing to live up to those standards. Parental identity threat not only suggests that parents are not fulfilling their own or society's standards of good parenting, but it also conveys that their behaviors could create harm for their children (Clark & Mills, 1979). In turn, these parents experience the emotional state of shame, which provides an emotive indication that their social standing as a parent is in jeopardy (Tangney et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 1. Parental identity threat is positively related to shame.

With respect to managing one's overall self-concept, people devote more attention to aspects of their self-concepts that are salient and in need of protection (e.g., Capitano et al., 2017; Maurer et al., 2001; Simon, 1992; Thoits, 1991). Because the overall self-concept is tied to multiple role identities (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991), people with an activated role identity may prioritize that role over other roles (Thoits, 1991). Additionally, people may prioritize role identities that are under threat because of the biological need to maintain a positive self-concept (e.g., Leary, 2007; Turner, 1978). Shame, in particular, serves as a guiding force for overcoming an identity threat and usually provokes two dominant reactions: self-protection (Bonner et al., 2017; Greenbaum et al., 2020) in the form of withdrawal (Tangney et al., 2007) and identity repair or maintenance (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). Each of these two reactions are expected to have different implications for the work and parenting roles regarding our theoretical model.

Work and parenting roles are often in competition because of the large demands of each role (Johnston & Swanson, 2007; Ladge & Little, 2019), which constrains the availability of self-resources for work and parenting duties (Ladge & Greenberg, 2015). Because of the inherent tension between these two roles (Duncan et al., 2003), parental identity threat may induce shame, which provokes self-protective behaviors in the form of reduced work productivity. People experiencing shame protect themselves by withdrawing from situations that reinforce a flawed identity, or that further undermine the vulnerable identity (Ferguson et al., 2007; Haidt, 2013; Tangney, 1995). In this respect, parental identity threat triggers employees' shame reactions that encourage them to pull away from their work responsibilities. By reducing work productivity, employees manage shame by reaffirming their devotion to the parenting role and by conveying that they will not allow work to adversely affect their parenting duties. By limiting their attention to work, they also manage shame by preventing others from judging them as being more devoted to work than to their children (e.g., Ladge & Little, 2019).

Yet, those experiencing shame may also take action to restore their identity (Gausel & Leach, 2011). After experiencing an identity threat, people may use their subsequent shame to motivate socially-acceptable behaviors that illustrate their commitment to a role (Bonner et al., 2017; Leary, 2007; Lickel et al., 2014). In response to parental identity threat, shame may provoke a shift of self-resources toward parenting (i.e., investment in parenting; Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989). For example, parents may restore their parental identities, and alleviate shame, by spending additional quality time with their children (e.g., Gutman et al., 2005). By shifting their self-resources toward parenting, parents are responding to their shame by aligning their behaviors with their desired identity of good parenting (e.g., Ramarajan & Reid, 2013; Tajfel, 1974) and conveying to those around them that they are good parents (Ladge & Little, 2019).

Hypothesis 2. Shame mediates the negative indirect relationship between parental identity threat and work productivity.

Hypothesis 3: Shame mediates the positive indirect relationship between parental identity threat and investment in parenting.

The Moderating Role of Emotional Stability

Individuals respond to threatening events differently depending on their emotional stability (Suls et al., 1998). Emotional stability captures a person's level of psychological adjustment (Costa & McCrae, 1992), or abilities and self-confidence to respond to situational demands in a functional manner (Huang et al., 2014; Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010). Those low in emotional stability, also known as neurotics, process events in a way that draws out the stressfulness or potential harm that may result from the situation (Suls et al., 1998). This is because people low in emotional stability are predisposed to evaluate information negatively, with more self-criticism, and with enhanced doubt regarding their abilities to handle the event (Smillie et al., 2006). Indeed, extant research demonstrates that people with low emotional stability respond to trying circumstances with stronger emotional reactions and less desirable behaviors (Cullen & Sackett, 2003; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009; Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016). In contrast, those high in emotional stability are more self-confident, calmer, and reassured when exposed to challenges and thus respond to unfavorable events with more even reactions and less self-doubt (Huang et al., 2014; Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010).

Emotional stability also affects handling of identity-related information (Hardin & Lakin, 2009). Extant research suggests that self-discrepancies are less pronounced for those high in emotional stability (e.g., Scott & O'Hara, 1993; Weilage & Hope, 1999). Additionally, identity uncertainty is easier to overcome for those with adjustment skills (Ladge & Greenberg, 2015),

such as those high in emotional stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Accordingly, emotional stability may alter the extent to which parental identity threat results in shame. Because they are less prone to worrying, less self-critical, and more well-equipped with respect to coping tactics (e.g., Judge et al., 2013; Smillie et al., 2006), employees high in emotional stability are less likely to interpret parental identity threat as being shameful because they are not as negative and insecure regarding their failure to live up to their desired parental identities. Thus, they are less concerned about being judged as an ill-equipped parent.

Hypothesis 4: Emotional stability moderates the relationship between parental identity threat and shame, such that the positive relationship is weaker in the form of a mitigating effect when emotional stability is higher versus lower.

Because emotional stability is expected to alter the relationship between parental identity threat and shame, we also expect it to influence the indirect relationships between parental identity threat with work productivity and investment in parenting. Compared to those low in emotional stability, those high in emotional stability have a healthy sense of psychological adjustment and calmer orientations (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; Judge et al., 2013), such that they respond to parental identity threat with weaker shame reactions that subsequently lessen vulnerabilities and the need for identity repair or reaffirmation (Cullen & Sackett, 2003). Thus, high (versus low) emotional stability is expected to weaken the positive relationship between parental identity threat and shame, which then lessens identity re-stabilization efforts in terms of relationships with work productivity and investment in parenting.

Hypothesis 5: Emotional stability moderates the indirect relationship between parental identity threat and work productivity via shame such that the negative indirect relationship is weaker when emotional stability is higher versus lower.

Hypothesis 6: Emotional stability moderates the indirect relationship between parental identity threat and investment in parenting via shame such that the positive indirect relationship is weaker when emotional stability is higher versus lower.

Overview of Studies

We conducted three studies to examine our hypotheses. In Study 1, to establish internal validity, we experimentally manipulate parental identity threat and use time-lagged data to test the relationship between parental identity threat and shame (Hypothesis 1) and the indirect effect of parental identity threat on work productivity through shame (Hypothesis 2). We also examined the moderating effect of emotional stability in relation to our mediated model (Hypotheses 4 and 5). In Study 2, we establish external validity by testing our entire theoretical model using survey-based field data from employee-spouse dyads (Hypotheses 1-6). This study extends Study 1 by also examining investment in parenting as an outcome (Hypotheses 3 and 6). In Study 3, we utilize an experience sampling method (ESM) design to again test our entire theoretical model (Hypotheses 1-6) and to enhance predictive support for the relationship between shame and our outcomes. This latter study demonstrates the robustness of our predictions by testing our hypotheses over 15 days using different operationalizations of the key constructs and by demonstrating the incremental validity of parental identity threat over and above theoretically-related constructs. As shown in Table 1, we followed Bliese and Wang (2020) to calculate post-hoc observed power for the estimated parameters in our hypothesized model for Studies 1-3. Our studies demonstrated substantial power to detect effects.

 Insert Table 1 about here

Study 1 Method

Participants and Procedure

After obtaining IRB approval, we collected data from North American working parents using Amazon's Mechanical Turk Prime (MTurk) in exchange for \$2.50. We recruited participants with 90% approval ratings on MTurk. We approved participants based on their current work status, whether they had children living at home, and whether they worked the next day. Approved participants completed the Time 1 survey the next morning (7-11AM CST). Later that night (5-11PM CST), participants completed the Time 2 survey. Because we recruited participants until we received our targeted sample size, we were unable to report traditional response rates (see Shockley & Allen, 2013, 2015) and instead report the retention rate from the Time 1 to the Time 2 surveys.

Two hundred and ninety-seven working parents participated in the Time 1 survey. Among them, 208 working parents participated in the Time 2 survey (retention rate: 70.0%). Following best practices for careless responding (Meade & Craig, 2012), we excluded five participants who did not pass one or both attention checks at Time 1 and 2 (three participants at Time 1, one participant at Time 2, and one participant for both time periods). The attention check question for both time periods stated: "Please choose 'agree' for this question." We also removed two cases that had duplicate IP addresses. Our final sample was 201 working parents, comprised of 81 males (40.3%) and 120 females. The average age was 36.29 ($SD = 7.62$) years, 87.6% worked full time and 12.4% part time, with 40.01 ($SD = 8.43$) average work hours per week. Participants had an average of 1.99 ($SD = 1.12$) children, with the children having an average age of 8.29 ($SD = 5.58$) years.

At Time 1, participants first answered questions regarding their emotional stability. Participants were then randomly assigned to either a *high parental identity threat* condition or a

low parental identity threat condition. We relied on Jetten, Postmes and McAuliffe's (2002) work to create our manipulation of parental identity threat. All participants read: "*Because you are a working parent, we want to inform you of some recent research on working parents and their children. Recent research by the Family First Network found that working parents experience the following:*" In the *high* parental identity threat condition, participants then read:

Working parents (1) spend less quality time with their children, (2) miss out on more of their children's milestones, (3) spend less time thinking about what's best for their children, (4) have less energy to help their children with school assignments, (5) are less likely to attend school and extracurricular events. Although not always the case, these results make it so that children of working parents (1) are not as emotionally close to the working parent, (2) are more likely to question the value of having their own children, and (3) experience more resentment towards the working parent.

In the *low* parental identity threat condition, participants read:

Compared to non-working parents, working parents (1) spend just as much quality time with their children, (2) are equally as likely to be present for their children's milestones, (3) spend just as much time thinking about what's best for their children, (4) have just as much energy to help their children with school assignments, (5) are just as likely to attend school and extracurricular events. Although not always the case, these results make it so that children of working parents (1) are still emotionally close to the working parent, (2) are likely to see the value of having their own children, and (3) experience contentment towards the working parent.

Participants then responded to the manipulation check, shame, and demographic questions. To reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), we introduced a temporal

separation between our predictor variables and work productivity. That evening at Time 2, participants rated their work productivity throughout the day and were debriefed.

Measures

Unless noted, measures were rated on from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Manipulation check. We used a measure of parental identity threat as our manipulation check. Because identity threat occurs with respect to a variety of role identities (e.g., Dahm et al., 2019; Petriglieri, 2011), we created our parental identity threat measure by adapting four items from Aquino and Douglas's (2003) nine-item general measure of identity threat to reflect the parenting role. This approach is consistent with past research that has adapted general measures of constructs to create more specific forms of the construct (e.g., Babalola et al., 2021; Lim & Tai, 2014). We adapted the four items that provided the best face validity per our definition of parental identity threat. Participants were asked to respond to the following items with the stem "My role as a parent...": "was looked at in a negative way," "was judged in an unfair manner," "was unfairly criticized," and "was questioned in terms of my abilities or knowledge" ($\alpha = .96$).

Emotional stability. Participants responded to Saucier's (1994) full six-item measure of emotional stability regarding their traits (Saucier, 1994). They were asked: "How much do you disagree to agree that the following traits describe you?" The items were "moody," "envious," "temperamental," "fretful," "touchy," and "jealous" ($\alpha = .88$). We reverse-coded all six items so that higher values reflect higher levels of emotional stability.

Shame. Participants responded to the full four-item measure of shame developed by Lickel et al. (2005), which asked how they felt right now in terms of being "ashamed," "disgraced," "humiliated," and "embarrassed" ($\alpha = .93$).

Work productivity. We examined work productivity using a full three-item measure of work proficiency at Time 2 (Griffin et al., 2007). We asked participants to rate how well they performed “today” with all items including: “I carried out the core parts of my job well,” “I ensured my tasks were completed properly,” and “I completed my core tasks well using the standard procedures” ($\alpha = .89$).

Study 1 Results

Table 2 shows Study 1 means, standard deviations, and correlations. In terms of a manipulation check, we found participants in the high parental identity threat condition reported significantly higher parental identity threat ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.71$) than participants in the low parental identity threat condition ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.18$), $t(199) = 12.11$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.72$.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 4 and 5 were examined with hierarchical regression utilizing Hayes’s (2017) SPSS Process macro, with indirect effects calculated by constructing 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals from 5,000 bootstrap samples (Efron, 1987). The results presented in Table 3 show that in comparison to the low parental threat condition, high parental identity threat was positively related to shame ($b = 2.31$, $SE = .55$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Participants in the high parental identity threat condition reported significantly more shame ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.23$) than participants in the low condition ($M = 1.40$, $SD = .79$), $t(199) = 4.53$, $p < .001$, $d = .64$. Further, shame was negatively associated with work productivity ($b = -.21$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$). Supporting Hypothesis 2, shame mediated the negative relationship between parental identity threat and work productivity ($estimate = -.16$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI: $-.264$, $-.072$).

 Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

Next, we examined our moderation prediction (Hypothesis 4) and found a significant interactive effect of parental identity threat and emotional stability in predicting shame ($b = -.31$, $SE = .10$, $p = .004$). Simple slopes tests (Aiken et al., 1991) showed that when emotional stability was low ($-1\ SD$), parental identity threat was positively related to shame ($b = 1.13$, $SE = .19$, $t = 6.07$, $p < .001$). However, when emotional stability was high ($+1\ SD$), parental identity threat was not related to shame ($b = .35$, $SE = .19$, $t = 1.82$, ns). The form of the relationship (see Figure 1) confirmed this mitigating effect. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

 Insert Figure 1 about here

Following Preacher et al. (2007), we calculated conditional indirect effects at one standard deviation above and below the mean of emotional stability to evaluate Hypothesis 5—emotional stability moderates the indirect effect of parental identity threat on work productivity via shame. Supporting Hypothesis 5, the negative indirect effect of parental identity threat on work productivity through shame was weaker when emotional stability was high ($estimate = -.07$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI: $-.156$, $-.014$) than when it was low ($estimate = -.24$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI: $-.413$, $-.102$); these effects were significantly different from one another ($difference = .17$, 95% CI = $.080$, $.247$).

Study 1 demonstrates that parental identity threat reduces work productivity through shame, with emotional stability moderating the first stage of this mediated effect. To establish ecological validity and to test our full theoretical model, Study 2 utilizes a field sample of working parents and their spouses. Using worker-spouse dyads also helps reduce common method bias. In addition to examining Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5, Study 2 examines investment in parenting as an outcome (Hypotheses 3 and 6).

Study 2 Method

Participants and Procedure

After obtaining IRB approval, we collected data from North American working parents using a Qualtrics panel. Qualtrics requires participants to go through a rigorous vetting process to ensure participant authenticity. Qualtrics invited 804 participant-spouse dyads to participate in our research, with 275 dyads completing the survey (response rate: 34.2%). We then removed 16 couples in which at least one of the participants failed an attention check. Specifically, we excluded 10 focal participants that did not pass one or both available attention checks (3 participants failed the first attention check, 1 participant failed the second attention check, and 6 participants failed both attention checks). The first attention check statement was the same statement as used in Study 1. The second attention check was: “Please choose ‘never’ (number 1) for this question.” We also excluded 14 spouses who failed to choose ‘strongly disagree’ as a response to the attention check statement: “Please choose ‘strongly disagree’ (number 1) for this question.” Eight of the excluded couples included instances where both participants had failed attention checks.

Our final sample was 259 worker-spouse dyads, including 54 males (20.8%) and 205 females as focal participants. They were 38.04 years of age on average ($SD = 9.24$), 95.8% worked full time and 4.2% worked part time, and the average work hours were 40.81 per week ($SD = 6.55$). Of the spouses, the average age was 39.50 ($SD = 9.58$), 81.9% worked full time and 18.1% worked part time. The participants had an average of 2.24 children ($SD = 1.19$), with the average age being 10.14 years old ($SD = 6.55$).

The focal employees rated measures of parental identity threat, emotional stability, shame, and work productivity. Thereafter, spouses rated the focal participants’ investment in

parenting. Each participant reported their own demographics. Finally, Qualtrics compensated participants for their participation.

Measures

Unless noted, all measures were rated using 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Parental identity threat. To assess parental identity threat, we used the same four-item measure from the manipulation check in Study 1. In the prompt, we asked focal participants: “Over the last week, while at work, how strongly do you agree that you experienced the following?” with the stem “My role as a parent...”. A sample item is “was looked at in a negative way” ($\alpha = .93$).

Emotional stability. Focal participants rated emotional stability using the same six-item measure from Study 1. After reverse-coding, higher scores indicated higher emotional stability ($\alpha = .89$).

Shame. Focal participants responded to the same four-item measure as Study 1. They were asked to think about how often they felt emotions such as “ashamed” over the last week (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*; $\alpha = .94$).

Work productivity. We operationalized work productivity by examining work proficiency using the same three-item measure as in Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.94$). Focal participants indicated their agreement with questions regarding their work proficiency over the last week.

Investment in parenting. Spouses rated the focal participants’ investment in parenting using the four reported items of parenting “quality time” developed by Gutman et al. (2005). Specifically, spouses rated how often the focal participant and their children did activities together over the last week (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*). The four items include: “gone shopping,” “gone for walks,” and “done something around the house” and “played sports together.” As a

result of feedback from a reviewer, one item was dropped from this measure (viz., “played sports together”) because it may not generalize to experiences with very young children, leaving three remaining items ($\alpha = .76$). Our reported study findings remained the same with or without the inclusion of this item.

Control variables. We controlled for focal participants’ age, sex, average age of children, number of children, the focal participants’ parental identity salience, and household income, as these variables may affect individuals’ reactions to parenting dilemmas (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003) and have been used as controls in field studies of prior parenting research (Maurer et al., 2001). The focal participant’s parental identity salience was measured using a one-item measure from Simon (1992): “When thinking about your role as a parent, to what extent do you agree that this role is your most important role relative to the other roles?”

Additionally, to demonstrate the incremental validity of parental identity threat above and beyond the potential effects of work-family conflict, we controlled for the spouse’s ratings of the focal participant’s work-to-family conflict over the last week. We used the full four-item measure reported in Study 1 of (Kopelman et al., 1983, $\alpha = .86$), but we adapted the items to the spouse’s perspective. Spouses responded to four items: “My spouse has come home too tired to do some of the things he/she would like to do,” “My spouse has had so much work that it takes away from his/her other interests,” “I have not liked how often my spouse has been preoccupied with his/her work while at home,” and “My spouse’s work takes up time that he/she would like to spend with family” ($\alpha = .86$).

Study 2 Results

Table 4 provides means, standard deviations, and correlations for the Study 2 variables.

 Insert Table 4 about here

To determine construct validity, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) models in Mplus Version 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) that included parental identity threat, shame, work productivity, investment in parenting, emotional stability, and work-to-family conflict. The a priori six-factor model showed excellent fit ($\chi^2 (237) = 440.34$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05). This model demonstrated better fit as compared to the following alternative models: (a) a five-factor model in which indicators of parental identity threat and work-to-family conflict loaded on a single factor ($\chi^2 (242) = 891.15$, CFI = .86, TLI = .84, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .09, $\Delta\chi^2 (5) = 450.81$, $p < .001$), and (b) a one-factor model ($\chi^2 (252) = 2712.13$, CFI = .46, TLI = .41, RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .15, $\Delta\chi^2 (15) = 2271.79$, $p < .001$). These results support the distinctiveness of our constructs.

Hypothesis Testing

To investigate our hypotheses, we used latent variable structural equation modeling in Mplus Version 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012), with latent variables defined by fully-disaggregated items. To examine the significance of indirect and conditional indirect effects, we constructed 95% confidence intervals with 5,000 Monte Carlo bootstrap samples (Preacher et al., 2007).

Table 5 provides our full results and Figure 2 presents results from our proposed model.

As shown in Figure 2, parental identity threat was positively associated with shame ($b = .26$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Shame was negatively related to work productivity ($b = -.18$, $SE = .09$, $p = .04$). Shame mediated the negative relationship between parental identity threat and work productivity ($estimate = -.05$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI: $-.105, -.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Shame was positively related to investment in parenting ($b = .27$, $SE =$

.11, $p = .01$), and shame mediated the positive relationship between parental identity threat and investment in parenting ($estimate = .07$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI: .011, .150), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Insert Table 5 and Figure 2 about here

To test for moderated mediation, we first examined the moderating role of emotional stability (Hypothesis 4) and found a significant interactive effect of parental identity threat and emotional stability in predicting shame ($b = -.29$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). Confirming the mitigating effect shown in Figure 3, results from simple slope tests revealed that when emotional stability was low ($-1 SD$), parental identity threat was positively associated with shame ($b = .59$, $SE = .08$, $t = 7.78$, $p < .001$). However, when emotional stability was high ($+1 SD$), there was no effect ($b = -.08$, $SE = .10$, $t = -.84$, ns), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Hypotheses 5 and 6 posit that emotional stability moderates the indirect effects of parental identity threat on work productivity and investment in parenting via shame. Results showed that when emotional stability was low ($-1 SD$), parental identity threat had a negative indirect effect on work productivity via shame ($estimate = -.11$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI: -.225, -.007). When emotional stability was high ($+1 SD$), the effect disappeared ($estimate = .02$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: -.021, .062), supporting Hypothesis 5. Next, when emotional stability was low ($-1 SD$), parental identity threat had a positive indirect effect on investment in parenting via shame ($estimate = .16$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI: .035, .308). Yet, when emotional stability was high ($+1 SD$), there was no effect ($estimate = -.02$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI: -.084, .034). This supports Hypothesis 6.

Study 2 replicated and extended Study 1 by demonstrating that the interactive effect of parental identity threat and emotional stability indirectly relates to both work productivity and investment in parenting through shame. To further substantiate our predictions, we test our theoretical model with a third study that uses an ESM approach to examine within-person changes in relationships day-to-day. Study 3 also improves upon the previous studies by controlling for additional alternative explanations that could influence our findings.

Study 3 Method

Participants and Procedure

With IRB approval, we followed past sampling procedures (e.g., Little et al., 2015) by posting advertisements with a survey link on working parents support groups (e.g., whattoexpect.com, theworkingparent.com, lifeofdad.com) and social media (e.g., facebook.com, linkedin.com) requesting participants for a study on working parents. Participants were informed that the study would last 15 workdays (Monday-Friday for three weeks), and they would complete two surveys per day. They were also asked to provide contact information for their spouse/partner, who would be willing to participate by completing one survey per day. Couples earned up to \$130 based upon their level of participation in the daily surveys and were told compensation would be in the form of a personal check sent to their home address.

To be eligible, the focal participants were required to: (a) be at least 18 years of age, (b) work full-time (30+ hours per week), (c) be married or living with a partner, (d) have dependent children living at home, (e), work a traditional schedule (five days a week with typical work hours), (f) communicate face-to-face or electronically with coworkers daily, and (g) work and reside in the United States. After confirming they met the criteria, participants provided study consent, shared their spouse's contact information, and completed an opt-in survey assessing

demographics and other between-person study variables. Spouses were then contacted via email and provided their own opt-in survey assessing demographics and other between-person study variables. Initially, 224 focal participants clicked on the survey link, but only 175 completed the opt-in survey (response rate: 78.1%). Of those 175, 146 spouses began the spouse opt-in survey, and 141 completed it (response rate: 96.6%). Two weeks later, focal participants were emailed two surveys per day (afternoon and evening), and their spouse received 1 survey per day (evening). The focal afternoon survey was distributed at 2:00PM and closed at 4:30PM. It was completed on average at 2:50PM. The focal and spouse evening surveys were sent at 6:00PM and closed at 11:00PM. They were completed on average at 8:10PM and 8:23PM.

Of the 141 focal participants, 129 began the daily study. Following best practices (Gabriel et al., 2019), we retained surveys from participants who completed at least 3 full days of surveys. We also excluded three participants who were located internationally. This resulted in a final sample of 120 focal participants and their spouses (response rate: 68.6% from opt-in survey), who generated 1,513 days of data (84.1% completion rate; $M = 12.61$ days per focal participant). Focal participants were 45 males (37.5%) and 75 females, 39.32 years of age on average ($SD = 6.22$), 76.7% Caucasian, and their average work hours were 42.28 per week ($SD = 6.55$). Of the spouses, the average age was 39.80 ($SD = 6.59$), 83.3% Caucasian, 86.7% were employed, with 40.61 ($SD = 8.05$) average work hours per week. The participants had an average of 2.01 children ($SD = .99$), with the average age being 7.34 years of age ($SD = 4.65$).

Measures

Unless noted, measures were rated using the scale 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *to a great extent*.

Emotional stability (opt-in). Because meta-analytic findings suggest that other-reported personality may be more operationally valid than self-reported personality (Oh et al., 2011), we

had spouses rate the focal participant's emotional stability in the opt-in survey using the same six-item measure as Study 1 and 2 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). After reverse-coding, higher scores indicated higher levels of emotional stability ($\alpha = .79$).

Parental identity threat (afternoon). In the daily afternoon survey, focal participants rated their parental identity threat using the same four-item measure as the first two studies, with the prompt: "During work today, my role as a parent..." ($\alpha = .90$).

Shame (afternoon). Focal participants rated their shame with the full four-item measure validated by Bonner et al. (2017). This measure is superior to other measures because it captures the self-focused aspect of shame, which distinguishes it from similar emotions that are directed toward one's behaviors (e.g., guilt). Participants rated how they felt since starting their workday: "ashamed," "angry at self," "disgusted with self," and "dissatisfied with self" ($\alpha = .90$).

Work productivity and investment in parenting (evening). In the daily evening survey, focal participants rated their *work productivity* using three of six items from Wanberg et al.'s (2010) job search progress measure, which was adapted to reflect work goal progress. From the six-item measure, we selected the three items that were not reverse coded because of potential reverse-coding effects (e.g., DiStefano & Motl, 2006). Participants replied to the prompt "During work today..." with responses to the items "I was productive," "I made good progress on my work goals," and "I moved forward on my work goals" ($\alpha = .94$).

Spouses rated the focal participant's *investment in parenting* using an adapted version of the full three-item measure of parenting commitment developed by Greenberger and Goldberg (1989). Due to potential reverse-coding effects, we revised two reverse-coded items to reflect non-reverse coding and to fit the daily context. Spouses were prompted with "After work today, [spouse name]..." "focused on his/her role as a parent," "gave up personal pleasures, such as

socializing, to be with his/her children,” and “worked hard to be as good of a parent as possible” ($\alpha = .81$). This measure is generalizable to parenting children of multiple ages.

Control variables. We controlled for the focal participants’ sex and, using the same measures as Study 2, parental identity salience and the spouse’s ratings of the focal participant’s work-to-family conflict ($\alpha = .81$) at the between-level of analysis (opt-in survey). Additionally, to demonstrate that daily parental identity threat is a unique predictor in our analyses, and not merely empirically redundant with alternative explanations, we controlled for work-to-family and family-to-work conflict within-person (daily) – two commonly explored antecedents of outcomes across the work-family interface (e.g., French & Allen, 2020). Focal participants rated both their work-to-family and family-to-work conflict daily in the afternoon survey. Work-to-family conflict was measured using three items from Netemeyer et al.’s (1996) five-item measure. From this measure, we chose three items that were most relevant to our conceptual model: work-to-family conflict while in the work role and omitting two items that assessed conflict while residing in the family role. Responding to “Since starting work today...,” participants completed the items “the demands of my work have interfered with my home and personal life,” “the amount of time my job has taken has made it difficult to fulfill my personal responsibilities,” and “due to work-related duties, I had to make changes to my plans for personal and/or family activities” ($\alpha = .94$). Similarly, family-to-work conflict was measured using three items from Netemeyer et al.’s (1996) five-item measure. These three items were also used by Gabriel et al. (2020) in a recent ESM study. Participants responded to: “Since starting work today...” “the demands of family interfered with work-related activities,” “I had to put off doing things for work because of demands on my time for home,” and “things I wanted to do during work didn’t get done because of the demands of my family” ($\alpha = .94$). We also controlled

for daily work hours (evening survey) to account for resource loss throughout the day (Lanaj et al., 2020) as this could impact the outcomes. Lastly, we included day of the week (Monday-Friday) within-person to account for possible time-related trends in our data (Beal & Weiss, 2003).

Study 3 Results

Table 6 provides means, standard deviations, and correlations for Study 3 variables. Before hypothesis testing, we conducted two preliminary analyses. First, we tested a null model to ensure our daily variables exhibited within-person variability. As presented in Table 7, within-person variability ranged from 33.9% to 60.1%, with parental identity threat having the most within-person variability, thereby supporting multilevel analyses. Second, we conducted a multilevel CFA with 6 factors within-person (work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, parental identity threat, shame, work productivity, investment in parenting) and 8 factors between-person (work-to-family conflict, emotional stability). This hypothesized model demonstrated excellent fit ($\chi^2 (532) = 845.39$, CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .02, SRMR_{within} = .02). Further, this model demonstrated better fit than did the following alternative models: (a) a 5-factor model in which the Level 1 indicators of parental identity threat, work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict loaded on a single factor ($\chi^2 (554) = 4855.01$, CFI = .67, TLI = .63, RMSEA = .07, SRMR_{within} = .13, $S-B\Delta\chi^2 (22) = 1383.13$, $p < .001$) and (b) a one-factor model ($\chi^2 (575) = 10934.36$, CFI = .20, TLI = .13, RMSEA = .11, SRMR_{within} = .18, $S-B\Delta\chi^2 (43) = 3364.21$, $p < .001$). These results demonstrate the discriminant validity of our measures.

Insert Tables 6 and 7 about here

Hypothesis Testing

We tested our hypotheses via a multilevel path analysis model with observed variables in Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Level 1 predictors were group-mean centered and level 2 predictors were grand-mean centered (Hofmann et al., 2000). By group-mean centering level 1 predictors, we are able to effectively control for possible between-person methodological confounds such as social desirability and assess purely within-person relationships (Enders & Tofghi, 2007). Level 1 slopes were modeled as random for the focal variables, but within-person controls were specified with fixed slopes to reduce model complexity (Gabriel et al., 2019). We used 95% confidence intervals with 5,000 Monte Carlo bootstrap samples to test the significance of indirect and conditional indirect effects (Preacher et al., 2010).

Table 8 presents the multilevel path model results. As shown in the table, Hypothesis 1 was supported in that parental identity threat was positively related to shame ($\gamma = .31$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). Also, shame was negatively related to work productivity ($\gamma = -.23$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$). Moreover, shame mediated the relationship between parental identity threat and work productivity (*estimate* = $-.07$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: $-.120$, $-.030$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Contrary to expectations, shame was not related to investment in parenting ($\gamma = .07$, $SE = .06$, *ns*), and subsequently, shame did not mediate the relationship between parental identity threat and investment in parenting (*estimate* = $.02$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: $-.015$, $.064$).

Importantly, research suggests that shame is a self-reflective emotion that can take time to process and act on due to its ruminative nature (Lewis, 1995; Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). Thus, some outcomes of shame, such as investments in parenting, may be most resonant the day after experiences of parental identity threat and shame, as working parents also need more time to prepare for investments in their parenting roles. Therefore, following other ESM studies that examine next-day effects (i.e., Bono et al., 2013; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016), we

subsequently time-lagged ($t + 1$) our measure of investment in parenting and re-ran our entire path analytic model (see Table 9). As shown in the table, shame was positively related to next-day ($t + 1$) investment in parenting ($\gamma = .09$, $SE = .04$, $p = .049$). Further, shame mediated the positive relationship between parental identity threat and next-day investment in parenting ($estimate = .03$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI: .002, .058). Accounting for both same day (t) and next day ($t + 1$) results, at least partial support was found for Hypothesis 3.

 Insert Tables 8 and 9 about here

Using the aforementioned model presented in Table 9 as the most appropriate temporal approximation of shame's outcomes, we next tested moderation and found a significant interactive effect of parental identity threat and emotional stability in predicting shame ($\gamma = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $p = .03$). As depicted by the mitigating effect in Figure 4, results from simple slope tests revealed that when emotional stability was low ($-1 SD$), parental identity threat was positively related to shame ($\gamma = .41$, $SE = .06$, $t = 6.71$, $p < .001$). However, when it was high ($+1 SD$), the effect was weakened ($\gamma = .21$, $SE = .08$, $t = 2.56$, $p = .01$) and significantly different than the low condition ($difference = -.20$, $SE = .10$, $t = -2.04$, $p = .04$), supporting Hypothesis 4.

 Insert Figure 4 about here

Hypotheses 5 and 6 focus on conditional indirect effects. Results showed that when emotional stability was low ($-1 SD$), parental identity threat had a negative indirect effect on same day work productivity via shame ($estimate = -.09$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI: -.152, -.043). The effect was weaker at high ($+1 SD$) emotional stability ($estimate = -.05$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: -.103, -.009), and these effects were significantly different from one another ($difference = .04$; 95% CI =

.004, .097). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported. Next, when emotional stability was low ($-1\ SD$), parental identity threat had a positive indirect effect on next day investment in parenting via shame ($estimate = .04$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: .002, .077). However, when it was high ($+1\ SD$), the effect disappeared ($estimate = .02$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI: -.0004, .047). Considering the previously observed lack of a relationship between shame and same day investment in parenting, we conclude that Hypothesis 6 received at least partial support because conditional indirect effects were found when investment in parenting was examined as an outcome the next day.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

Our research makes several contributions to the literature. First, extant research has called for more research on blended work-family experiences because they provide a more targeted understanding of the complexities of simultaneously attending to the work and family domains (Gabriel et al., 2020). Gabriel et al. (2020) identified a working mother's breastfeeding demands as a blended work-family experience that poses significant challenges *and* benefits. Contributing to this line of inquiry, we identify parental identity threat as an additional blended work-family experience because the "threat" aspect of the parenting identity is particularly salient and propels a vulnerable emotional state that can then affect employee behavior. We also contribute to the literature by putting forth parental identity threat as a construct that is generalizable to both mothers and fathers. Past research on the management of family-related identity with respect to work has largely considered mothering and fathering roles in isolation (Gabriel et al., 2020; Humberd et al., 2015; Ladge & Greenberg, 2015; Ladge et al., 2018). As a function of historical, social, and biological factors (Desai et al., 2014), mothers and fathers are often presumed to have different criteria for categorizing themselves as good parents. However, a shift in societal norms

have made mothers' and fathers' work and family roles much more similar in some cultures (e.g., both parents fulfilling the "nurture" ideology; Humberd et al., 2015), which makes parental identity threat at work plausible for all employed parents (Ladge & Little, 2019). Thus, we contribute to the literature by proposing parental identity threat as a gender-neutral, blended work-family experience that has implications for both work and family behaviors.

We also provide a unique theoretical perspective, and corresponding mediating mechanism, for explaining why parental identity threat may lead to disparate cross-domain outcomes. Recent conceptual work by Ladge and Little (2019) discusses work-family image discrepancies, which occur when workers perceive a discrepancy between their desired and perceived work-family images. The nature of this discrepancy can result in impression management strategies that have varying implications for the work and family roles. We contribute to this line of work by operationalizing a work-family image discrepancy as a parental identity threat, which forces parents to consider potential deficiencies in their parenting roles while at work. Moreover, we theoretically delineate, and empirically test, why such discrepancies may produce diverging cross-domain outcomes by expanding Ladge and Little's (2019) arguments by suggesting that shame is an emotional mediator that is geared towards self-image maintenance (Leary, 2007). Shame indicates that individuals have violated social norms, which may compromise their social standing among other members of society (Tangney et al., 2007). Accordingly, shame can propel both avoidance- or approach-oriented behavioral reactions that serve to protect or to repair one's self-image (Bonner et al., 2017; Lickel et al., 2014). As our findings demonstrate, parental identity threat may result in shame that reduces work productivity in the work domain (avoidance), yet enhances investment in parenting in the family

domain (approach)—and each of these reactions help parents to manage their shame in a way that re-stabilizes their standing as “good” parents.

Past research on shame has mostly focused on its dysfunction in relation to withdrawal behaviors (Tangney et al., 2007). The shame literature is starting to note the plurality of shame in terms of producing *both* avoidance and approach behaviors (Greenbaum et al., 2020), but most research focuses on just one type of outcome without simultaneously considering both (e.g., Bonner et al., 2017; Lickel et al., 2014). To understand shame in terms of providing image *protection* and *repair*, we introduced the importance of considering cross-domain effects because one domain (e.g., work) may require image protection that corresponds with withdrawal, whereas the other domain (e.g., family) may require image repair that corresponds with proactive behaviors. Thus, we contribute to the shame literature by providing evidence of the dual function of shame and how it drives divergent cross-domain effects. Importantly, too, our findings suggest that the ruminative nature of shame (e.g., Lewis, 1995; Thompson & Bunderson, 2001) may not immediately produce identity restoration behaviors; time may need to pass before recognizing certain behavioral effects. As found in Study 3, parental identity threat resulted in same-day reductions in work productivity, but not same day investments in parenting. Rather, parental identity threat needed a one-day time lag in order to result in investment in parenting. These findings advance the shame literature by elucidating the need to consider timing in relation shame and subsequent withdrawal and/or restorative behaviors across the work-family interface.

Our research highlights that identity threat is not experienced equally by all (Hardin & Lakin, 2009). To the extent that parental identity threat represents a type of work-family image discrepancy, we expand upon Ladge and Little’s (2019) work by notating the types of individuals who are less vulnerable to the effects of misaligned work and family identities.

Whereas emotionally-stable individuals have been known to face challenging events with calmness and collected orientations (Judge et al., 2013), little has been established in terms of how emotional stability might be beneficial for identity maintenance. In this respect, we contribute to the literature by revealing that employees' high in emotional stability may be better positioned to handle self-image discrepancies, such that they have less dysfunctional reactions.

We also extend past research on identity integration. Recent studies on role identities have emphasized the benefits of integrating multiple role identities across social contexts (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015). Scholars contend that by bringing the "whole" self to work (Ashforth et al., 2016), employees experience more authenticity in terms of "who they are" and thus feel more invigorated on the job (Cable et al., 2013), express more creativity (Madjar et al., 2002), have better workplace relationships (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015) and avoid unethical conduct (Ebrahimi et al., 2019). Although identity integration provides benefits, it can also pose challenges for employees and organizations (e.g., Little et al., 2015; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). We argue that to effectively manage the risks associated with identity integration, specific events need to be evaluated that may call into question one identity over another identity (e.g., Dahm et al., 2019). In this respect, we underscore the importance of studying identity threats that do not conform only to the work domain. Because threatened identities are especially salient and significant to one's overall self-concept (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2016; Methot et al., 2017), their activation in a non-conforming domain may jeopardize desirable behaviors within that domain, as our research illustrates through the examination of parental identity threat.

Our research also broadens the work-family literature. Past work-family research has mainly investigated how generalized experiences (e.g., work-to-family conflict, work-to-family enrichment) in one domain spillover to create similar experiences in another domain (e.g.,

Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 1999; McNall et al., 2010). Our research is different in that we examine specific events that may simultaneously hurt the work domain while helping the family domain. Also, we unveil the complexities of the work and family domains by treating them as a holistic, blended occurrence that is idiosyncratically experienced by working parents as they navigate identity maintenance and the associated emotions and subsequent behaviors that unfold from them. This helps add parental identity threat to the expanding areas of the work-family literature that treat work-family phenomena as intricate experiences with ill-defined boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000) and ramifications for employees on even a daily basis.

Practical Implications

The parenting role is an important and long-lasting responsibility throughout life (Shirani et al., 2012). When parents have children in the home, they often find that the majority of their self-resources are devoted to their parenting and work roles (Pew Research Center, 2015), which increases the competition between these two roles in terms of effectively fulfilling both identities (Ladge & Little, 2019). Parents face circumstances where they have to prioritize one role over the other (Ladge & Greenberg, 2015; Maurer et al., 2001), while trying to maintain a good image in each role (Ladge & Little, 2019). To effectively understand the intricacies between these two roles, we contribute to the literature by identifying parental identity threat as a circumstance that increases the salience of the parenting role while at work. Working parents may respond to their threatened identities with shame that propels them to reduce their work contributions.

Organizations can use this information to work with employees who may feel as though their parenting identities are in jeopardy. By acknowledging the difficulties of managing each role, and providing resources to overcome identity threat, organizations can more effectively help employees manage cross-domain tensions while maintaining workplace productivity.

Our research also provides a practical contribution by exposing the dual function of shame. Shame is not always destructive; rather, it can be a motivational force for trying to repair one's threatened identity. As we demonstrate, shame can encourage parents to invest more time into parenting, which provides social benefits by attending to the growth, development, and emotional needs of the next generation. Organizations can use this information to help employees channel their shame into behaviors that are less self-protective and more proactive in terms of restoring a harmed identity. Moreover, organizations can train managers to recognize employees' shame, which is identifiable when employees are especially self-critical and imply that they are deficient as a person (e.g., "I am a bad person"). Leaders may be able to work with employees' vulnerabilities by helping them to identify ways to proactively bounce back from their self-despair without withdrawing from their work roles. Regarding parental identity threat specifically, organizations may be able to help employees manage their shame by giving them more time off to attend to their children, in exchange for focused and hard work while on the job.

When it comes to attending to family challenges while at work, organizations would benefit from recognizing that some employees handle the intricacies of these two roles more effectively than others. A person lacking emotional stability is easily recognized early in a social relationship; they tend to think and to communicate with an explicit orientation towards negativity (Roberts et al., 2006). Thus, managers may be able to easily identify employees with low emotional stability and then provide them with extra support. Managers could recruit high emotional stability mentors to provide support to employees who are less emotionally stable and role model successful identity management behaviors (Turban & Lee, 2007). For example, mentors could discuss their own parental identity threat experiences and how they overcame them in ways that were functional to both their organizations and their families.

Limitations and Future Directions

We tested our research with three studies, each of which produced their own limitations. Study 1 was limited because we recruited participants through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and thus were unable to directly verify the identities and outside employment status of participants. Also, Study 1 utilized an experimental study design, which is desirable for testing theory and establishing internal validity, but it could lack ecological validity. Additionally, although we attempted to limit common method variance (CMV) by offering a time separation between ratings of shame and work productivity, it is possible study participants experienced low work productivity that then resulted in shame reactions. To address these limitations, we replicated our results with Study 3 (an ESM design) by examining changes in variables over a 15-day period.

Like Study 1, Study 2 is limited because we lacked control over participant recruitment. Although Qualtrics uses a stringent vetting process, we were unable to independently verify spousal respondents. We addressed this limitation in Study 3 by directly verifying the identities of participants. Also, Study 2 used a number of self-reported measures, which could contribute to CMV. Yet, we found evidence of an interactive effect, which reduces CMV concerns (Evans, 1985). Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of Study 2 could make our results susceptible to alternative effects, which we partially addressed by controlling for work-to-family conflict and thus showing the incremental validity of parental identity threat. Both Studies 2 and 3 are limited because parental identity threat and shame were rated at the same point in time, which leaves open concerns regarding causal direction and participants responding in a consistent manner to be "good" participants. Even though Study 1 provides some evidence of parental identity threat inducing shame, future research would benefit from a longitudinal study design that better establishes causality and accounts for biased responding effects.

Study 3, our ESM study, improved upon Studies 1 and 2 by exercising considerable control over the data collection process, including guarding against identity fraud. Additionally, although ESM studies may enhance participant fatigue (Beal, 2015), Study 3 complements our prior studies by offering a within-person, time-lagged study design across 15 days. ESM studies provide strengths over between-person studies by group-mean centering the level 1 predictors, which removes effects of between-person confounds and allows for an unbiased examination of relations among the level 1 variables (Gabriel et al., 2019). Like Study 2, we accounted for the possibility of alternative effects in Study 3 by controlling for sex, parental identity salience, and spouse-rated work-to-family conflict between-person, as well as daily work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, work hours, and day of week. Thus, we demonstrate the incremental validity of parental identity threat and provide a robust test of our predictions.

Finally, for each study, we had participants rate their own work productivity, which could result in biased reporting. In Studies 1 and 3, we introduced a time separation between the focal participants' ratings of shame and work productivity to account for this limitation. Even so, future research may improve by having supervisors rate the focal participants' work productivity. Collectively, our three studies provide a multimethod approach to testing our predictions, which is effective for addressing the limitations of any one study (Shadish et al., 2002).

Future research may consider predictors of parental identity threat. Research by Duncan et al. (2003) suggests that there are ethnic, class, and religious differences in terms of prioritizing the work versus parenting identity. Across social classes, parents have different ideologies concerning "good parenting," which could affect how strongly a parental identity threat at work results in shame reactions (Williams et al., 2016). Once shame is experienced, too, parents from diverse backgrounds may use different tactics to protect or restore their parental identities, such

as managing shame by buying their children gifts versus spending quality time together. Future research could also explore the effects of long-lasting parental identity threat (Gruenewald et al., 2007). Left unresolved, parents' chronic shame could result in workplace turnover (Conroy et al., 2017) or family withdrawal as way of hiding from the main target of their shame. Future research may also consider group composition in relation to parental identity threat. For example, Joshi and Knight (2015) found that the demographic attributes of work groups (e.g., sex, education, tenure) affect who defers to whom when making group decisions. Similarly, future research could investigate group demographics in relation to the frequency of parental identity threat. As one possibility, participants in mixed-sex groups may engender gender stereotypes (Heilman, 2012) that result in enhanced parental identity threat. Yet, this effect may be weaker when mixed-sex groups follow political correctness norms (Goncalo et al., 2015).

Conclusion

With today's workers experiencing pressure to live up to "worker" and "parenting" ideals (Ladge & Little, 2019), it is important to understand circumstances that make the delicate balance between these two roles especially difficult. We introduce parental identity threat as a blended work-family experience that prompts working parents to attend to their parenting identity while at work. Parental identity threat induces parents to experience shame, which results in disparate cross-domain behaviors in the form of reduced work productivity and enhanced investment in parenting. These behavioral reactions serve to protect and restore the parenting identity. However, these effects of parental identity threat are buffered for employees who are more emotionally stable. We hope future research will use our research as a springboard to continue to explore the important interplay of work and parenting identities.

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Table 1
Post-hoc Observed Power Analyses for Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3

Parameter	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3	
	<i>t</i> value	power	<i>t</i> value	power	<i>t</i> value	power
Parental identity threat → shame	4.20	.99	3.78	.96	5.27	.99
Shame → work productivity	-4.31	.99	-2.08	.55	-2.23	.61
Shame → investment in parenting			2.47	.69	2.20	.59
Emotional stability X parental identity threat → shame	-2.92	.83	-5.32	.99	-2.29	.63

Note. Bliese and Wang (2020) was used to calculate observed power for the estimated parameters in the hypothesized model.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations for Variables in Study 1

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Parental identity threat	-	-	-			
2. Shame	1.78	1.11	.31**	(.93)		
3. Work productivity	6.23	.75	.00	-.28**	(.89)	
4. Emotional stability	5.11	1.28	.07	-.40**	.17*	(.88)

Notes. $N = 201$. SD = standard deviation. Parental identity threat was manipulated (0 = low, 1 = high).

Reliabilities are reported on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3
Moderated Mediation Results from Study 1

Predictor	Shame			Work productivity		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Main predictors/moderator						
Parental identity threat	2.31***	.55	4.20	.14	.11	1.26
Emotional stability	-.19*	.08	-2.31			
Interaction						
Parental identity threat × Emotional stability	-.31**	.10	-2.92			
Mediator						
Shame				-.21***	.05	-4.31
<i>R</i> ²		.30***			.09***	

Notes. *N* = 201. Parental identity threat was manipulated (0 = low, 1 = high). Unstandardized regression coefficients reported.

SE = standard error.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations for Variables in Study 2

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	38.04	9.24	-											
2. Sex	.79	.41	-.16**	-										
3. Average age of children	10.14	6.55	.63**	-.04	-									
4. Number of children	2.24	1.19	.19**	.04	.34**	-								
5. Parental identity salience	6.36	1.13	.07	.03	.01	.03	-							
6. Household income	4.03	1.32	.07	-.17**	.00	-.05	-.10	-						
7. Work-to-family conflict	3.84	1.61	-.17**	-.03	-.17**	.03	-.06	.04	(.86)					
8. Parental identity threat	2.14	1.38	-.16**	-.03	-.15**	-.03	-.22**	.10	.35**	(.93)				
9. Shame	1.66	1.02	-.18**	-.01	-.19**	.04	-.15*	.20**	.24**	.66**	(.94)			
10. Work productivity	6.16	.90	.02	.08	.06	.02	.14*	-.03	-.13**	-.29**	-.31**	(.94)		
11. Investment in parenting	4.48	1.34	-.03	.13*	-.02	-.01	.00	.20**	-.14*	.01	.14*	.13*	(.76)	
12. Emotional stability	5.02	1.32	.26**	-.05	.22**	.03	.13*	-.06	-.34**	-.47**	-.51**	.19**	.00	(.89)

Notes. $N = 259$. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female). *SD* = standard deviation. Work-to-family conflict and investment in parenting are spouse-rated. All other variables are rated by the focal employee. Reliabilities are reported on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 5
Moderated Mediation Results from Study 2

Predictor	Shame			Work productivity			Investment in parenting		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Control variables									
Age	.00	.01	-.10	-.01	.01	-1.05	.00	.01	-.01
Sex	.00	.10	.03	.14	.12	1.17	.57*	.22	2.57
Average age of children	-.01	.01	-1.79	.00	.01	.24	-.01	.02	-.49
Number of children	.07	.04	1.80	.02	.05	.43	.02	.07	.27
Parental identity salience	-.02	.04	-.56	.06	.06	1.09	.01	.08	.15
Household income	.06	.03	1.65	.04	.04	.92	.19**	.07	2.77
Work-to-family conflict	.01	.04	.16	-.03	.05	-.66	-.24*	.09	-2.51
Main predictors/moderator									
Parental identity threat	.26***	.07	3.78	-.10	.07	-1.54	-.14	.10	-1.34
Emotional stability	-.28***	.06	-4.48						
Interaction									
Parental identity threat × Emotional stability	-.29***	.06	-5.32						
Mediator									
Shame				-.18*	.09	-2.08	.27*	.11	2.47
<i>R</i> ²		.65***			.11*			.15**	

Notes. *N* = 259. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female). Unstandardized coefficients reported. *SE* = standard error.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Table 6
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations for Variables in Study 3

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Level 1 variables														
1. Work-to-family conflict	2.33	1.50	(.94)											
2. Family-to-work conflict	2.49	1.59	.22**	(.94)										
3. Work hours	7.96	1.15	.10**	-.10**	-									
4. Day of the week	2.97	1.41	-.03	.00	-.11**	-								
5. Parental identity threat	1.24	.63	.08**	.09**	.03	-.03	(.90)							
6. Shame	1.38	.75	.13**	.07**	.04	-.05	.38**	(.90)						
7. Work productivity	4.87	1.25	.05*	-.11**	.24**	-.03	.01	-.07**	(.94)					
8. Investment in parenting	5.18	1.29	.00	.09**	-.04	-.02	-.01	.01	-.05	(.81)				
Level 2 variables														
9. Sex	.63	.49	.13	.19*	-.22*	.08	-.24**	.00	-.04	.25**	-			
10. Parental identity salience	6.38	.76	.01	-.01	-.13	-.08	.11	.06	.05	.18	.12	-		
11. Work-to-family conflict	3.89	1.40	.19*	.07	.18*	-.04	.09	.08	-.08	-.24**	-.12	-.17	(.81)	
12. Emotional stability	4.84	1.17	-.02	-.12	.10	.01	-.12	-.22*	.09	.10	-.09	-.11	-.02	(.79)

Note. Level 1 $N = 1513$ for all variables except investment in parenting ($N = 1413$); Level 2 $N = 120$. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female). SD = standard deviation. Day of the week = Monday-Friday. Investment in parenting, Level 2 work-to-family conflict, and emotional stability are spouse-rated. All other variables are rated by the focal employee. Correlations for within-individual (Level 1) variables reflect within-person centered relationships. Level 1 variables were aggregated to the between-person level in order to calculate correlations at Level 2. Reliabilities are reported on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 7

Percentage of Within-Person Variance in Study 3 Daily Variables

Variables	Within-Person Variance (σ^2)	Between- Person Variance (τ_{00})	% of Within- Person Variance
Work-to-family conflict	.84	1.37	37.9%
Family-to-work conflict	.85	1.65	33.9%
Work hours	1.43	1.02	58.4%
Parental identity threat	.26	.17	60.1%
Shame	.26	.30	46.0%
Work productivity	.73	.84	46.3%
Investment in parenting	.76	.89	46.2%

Note. The percentage of variance within-person was calculated as $\sigma^2 / (\sigma^2 + \tau_{00})$. $t =$ same day outcomes.

Table 8
Multilevel Moderated Mediation Path Analysis Results from Study 3

Predictor	Shame			Work productivity (same day)			Investment in parenting (same day)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Level 1 predictors									
Work-to-family conflict	.05**	.02	2.69	.06	.04	1.60	-.02	.04	-.47
Family-to-work conflict	.02	.02	.64	-.08**	.03	-2.59	.09**	.03	2.89
Family-to-work conflict	.05**	.02	2.69	.06	.04	1.60	-.02	.04	-.47
Work hours	.00	.01	.42	.17***	.03	4.99	-.02	.03	-.89
Day of the week	-.01	.01	-1.72	-.01	.01	-.45	-.02	.02	-1.02
Parental identity threat	.31***	.06	5.62	.06	.06	1.05	-.06	.06	-1.15
Shame				-.23***	.06	-3.70	.07	.06	1.11
Level 2 predictors									
Sex	-.02	.10	-.17	-.06	.16	-.37	.45*	.18	2.50
Parental identity salience	.04	.07	.55	.04	.11	.33	.14	.12	1.25
Work-to-family conflict	.04	.04	.81	-.06	.06	-.98	-.14*	.06	-2.24
Emotional stability	-.10	.06	-1.81						
Cross-level moderator									
Parental identity threat × Emotional stability	-.08*	.04	-2.12						
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²		.09			.20			.11	

Note. Level 1 *N* = 1513; Level 2 *N* = 120. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female). Unstandardized coefficients reported. *SE* = standard error.

Pseudo-*R*² calculated using Snijders and Bosker's (2012) formula.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Table 9

Multilevel Moderated Mediation Path Analysis Results with Next Day Investment in Parenting from Study 3

Predictor	Shame			Work productivity (same day)			Investment in parenting (next day)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Level 1 predictors									
Work-to-family conflict	.05**	.02	2.69	.06	.04	1.59	.07*	.04	2.01
Family-to-work conflict	.02	.02	.64	-.08*	.03	-2.59	-.01	.03	-.28
Work hours	.00	.01	.42	.17***	.03	4.99	.03	.03	1.04
Day of the week	-.01	.01	-1.72	-.01	.01	-.45	-.02	.02	-1.02
Parental identity threat	.31***	.06	5.62	.06	.06	1.04	.02	.05	.36
Shame				-.23***	.06	-3.71	.09*	.04	1.97
Level 2 predictors									
Sex	-.02	.10	-.17	-.06	.16	-.37	.45*	.18	2.46
Parental identity salience	.04	.07	.55	.04	.11	.34	.12	.12	1.08
Work-to-family conflict	.04	.04	.81	-.06	.06	-.97	-.14*	.06	-2.22
Emotional stability	-.10	.06	-1.81						
Cross-level moderator									
Parental identity threat × Emotional stability	-.08*	.04	-2.12						
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²		.09			.19			.11	

Note. Level 1 *N* = 1513; Level 2 *N* = 120. Sex (0 = male, 1 = female). Unstandardized coefficients reported. *SE* = standard error.

Pseudo-*R*² calculated using Snijders and Bosker's (2012) formula.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Figure 1. Interaction of Parental Identity Threat and Emotional Stability Predicting Shame in Study 1

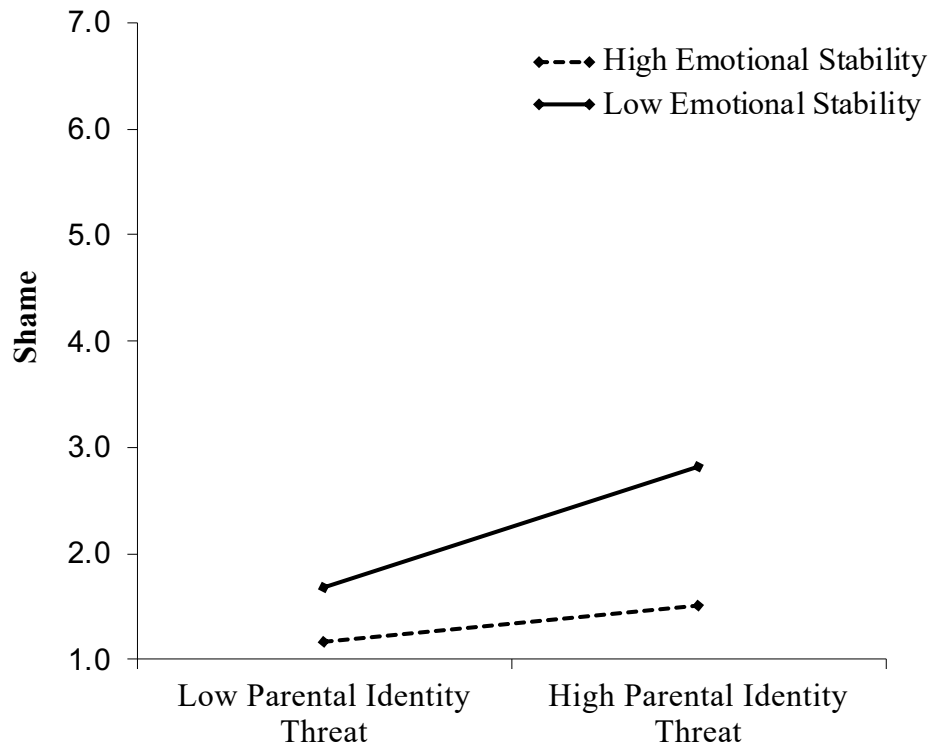
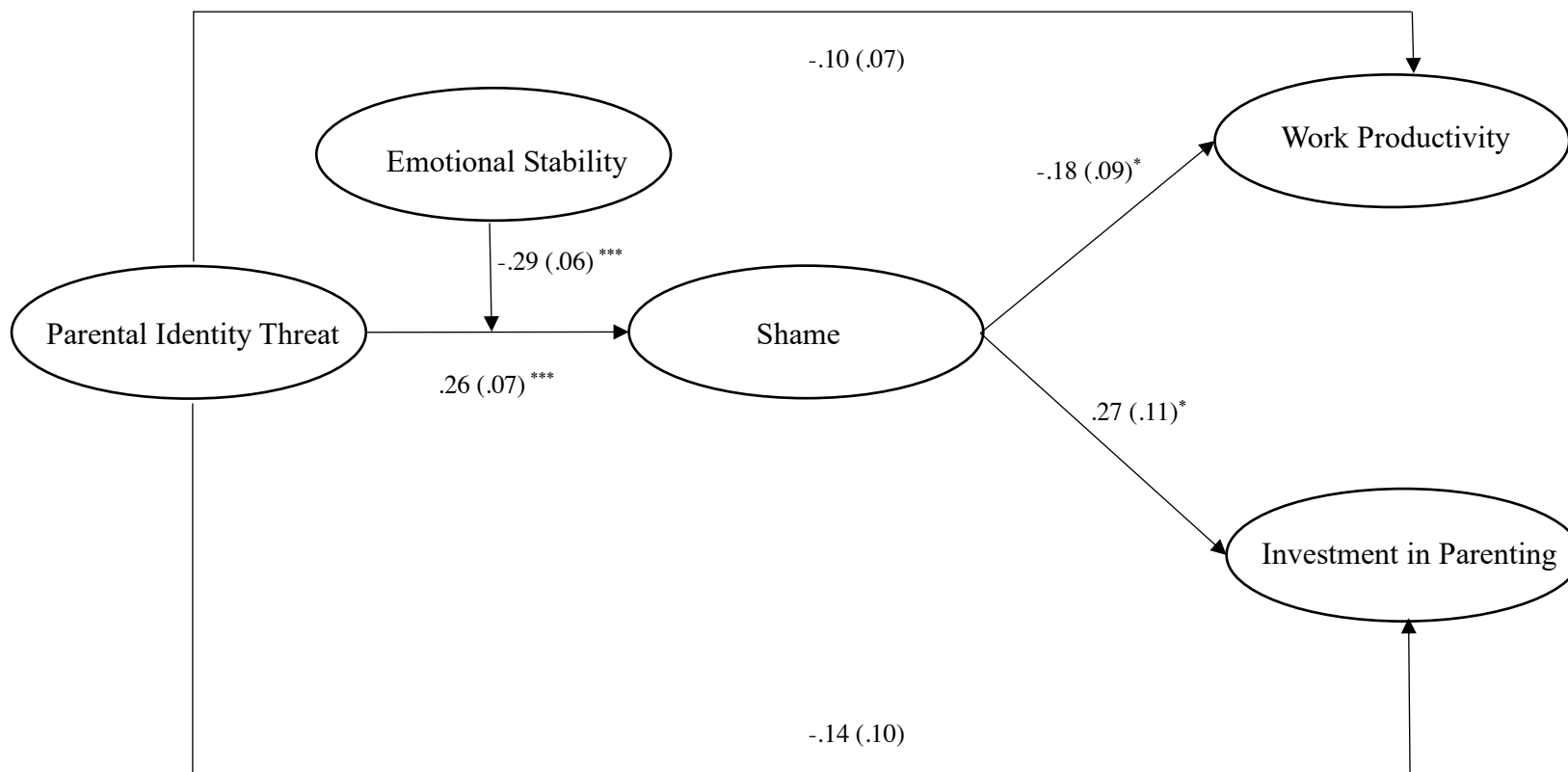


Figure 2. Latent Structural Equation Model Results from Study 2



Note: $N = 259$. Control variables are omitted for simplicity. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with the standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 3. Interaction of Parental Identity Threat and Emotional Stability Predicting Shame in Study 2

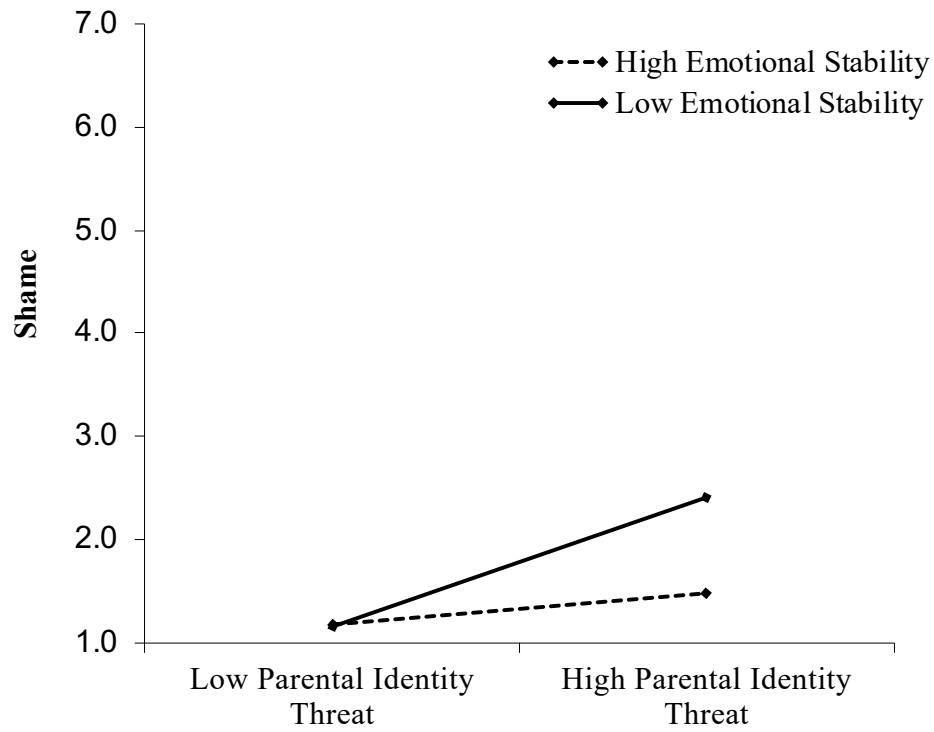


Figure 4. Interaction of Parental Identity Threat and Emotional Stability Predicting Shame in Study 3

